

DATELINE: NO. 106 NEW YORK
ALINA ZERANSKI

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LOOKING FOR THE PERFECT CHRISTMAS TREE
(INSERTS IN TAPE LIBRARY)

ANNCR: DATELINE: NEW YORK -- PICTURES IN SOUND OF PEOPLE, PLACES AND EVENTS HERE IN AMERICA'S METROPOLIS -- BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE VOICE OF AMERICA EACH WEEK AT THIS TIME. TODAY, A REPORT PREPARED BY SID PAUL ON THE ANNUAL SEARCH FOR ONE OF THE MOST FAMOUS TREES IN AMERICA.

VOICE: NEW YORK CITY'S ROCKEFELLER CENTER IS THE WORLD'S LARGEST PRIVATELY OWNED BUSINESS AND ENTERTAINMENT CENTER -- TWENTY-ONE HUGE BUILDINGS ON NEARLY NINE HECTARES IN THE HEART OF THE CITY. HIGH ON THE LIST OF VISITOR MAGNETS IS ITS COLORFUL OUTDOOR PLAZA -- A RECTANGULAR RESERVOIR OF LIGHT AND AIR IN A SKYSCRAPER CANYON. IT IS THE SETTING FOR ICE-SKATING IN THE WINTER, AND OUTDOOR DINING IN THE SUMMER. HERE TOO, THE ANNUAL WINTER ARRIVAL OF "THE MOST BEAUTIFUL TREE IN THE WORLD" -- THE ROCKEFELLER CENTER GIANT CHRISTMAS TREE -- WHICH SIGNALS THE START OF THE CHRISTMAS SEASON IN MANHATTAN. YOU WOULD THINK THAT ROCKEFELLER CENTER WOULD GET SUCH A TREE FROM SOME FOREST -- FROM A CHOICE OF MANY. NOT SO. AS VOA'S SIDNEY PAUL WAS SURPRISED TO LEARN -- HERE'S WHAT REALLY HAPPENS:

THE ROCKEFELLER CENTER CHRISTMAS TREE -- USUALLY A FIR TREE OR A NORWAY SPRUCE -- STANDS ABOUT TWENTY-ONE METERS HIGH, HAS A BASE BRANCH SPREAD OF ABOUT THREE METERS AND WEIGHS ABOUT TWO THOUSAND, SEVEN HUNDRED KILOGRAMS.

VOICE:

(CONT'D) EVERY CHRISTMAS IT SITS IN A LOCATION WHERE THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE CROWD AROUND IT TO GET THE BEST VIEW. THEY HAVE TO SEE IT FROM ALL SIDES. THEREFORE, EXPLAINS MR. JAMES REED OF THE CENTER'S PUBLIC RELATIONS STAFF, IT MUST BE WHAT HE CALLS A FREE-STANDING TREE -- FULL ALL AROUND. AND, HE SAYS:

TAPE: CUT ONE -- REED

"THEY DON'T GENERALLY COME FROM FORESTS WHERE THERE ARE OTHER TREES GROWING -- GROWING IN CLOSE ABOUT THEM -- THAT PREVENTS THEM FROM BEING AS CLOSE TO THE PERFECT TREE AS WE ARE ALWAYS LOOKING FOR."

VOICE: FORTUNATELY, SAYS MR. REED, THROUGHOUT THE SPRING AND SUMMER, THE CENTER RECEIVES MANY LETTERS FROM PRIVATE CITIZENS WHO THINK THEY HAVE A TREE THAT MIGHT BE APPROPRIATE FOR ROCKEFELLER CENTER:

TAPE: CUT TWO -- REED

"WE'VE DISCOVERED OVER THE YEARS THAT PEOPLE FIND THAT THEY HAVE TREES IN THEIR FRONT YARDS, SIDE YARDS, THAT, WHEN THEY WERE PLANTED FORTY, FIFTY YEARS AGO, LOOKED NICE -- BUT NOW THEY FIND THAT THEY ARE ENORMOUS TREES THAT ARE GROWING INTO THEIR HOUSE, THAT ARE UPROOTING DRIVEWAYS -- AND THAT THEY WOULD LIKE TO HAVE THE TREE TAKEN OUT. AND THEY DON'T JUST WANT TO CUT IT DOWN. THEY'D LIKE TO SEE IT GO SOMEWHERE. THESE ARE GENERALLY THE KINDS OF TREES THAT WE DO FIND."

VOICE: LAST YEAR, FOR EXAMPLE, SAYS MR. REED, THE ROCKEFELLER CENTER CHRISTMAS TREE CAME FROM -- THE FRONT LAWN OF SOMEONE'S HOME IN NEARBY CONNECTICUT. THE YEAR BEFORE THAT, FROM A TREE FARM -- NOT A FOREST -- IN PENNSYLVANIA. THE YEAR BEFORE THAT, FROM SOMEONE'S GARDEN IN NEW JERSEY.

VOICE:

(CONT'D) MR. REED SAYS THE CENTER HAS ALREADY RECEIVED ABOUT A HALF-DOZEN LETTERS THIS YEAR, AND THAT A COMMITTEE IS ALREADY SEARCHING FOR THAT "PERFECT TREE."

HE SAYS THE FINAL SELECTION INVOLVES PERSONAL INSPECTION, PHOTOGRAPHING THE VARIOUS TREES, COMMITTEE CONSULTATION -- AND A CORPORATE AFFAIRS TYPE OF DECISION. AND THEY TAKE THAT DECISION VERY SERIOUSLY. AS HE PUTS IT: "IT'S SOMETHING THAT IS PRECIOUS TO US...IT'S PRECIOUS TO THE PEOPLE OF NEW YORK -- AND IT'S ENJOYED BY MILLIONS OF VISITORS." SO THE SEARCH IS ALREADY UNDERWAY, IN PREPARATION FOR MOUNTING THE 1976 ROCKEFELLER CENTER CHRISTMAS TREE ON NEXT DECEMBER THE NINTH.

ANNCR: THIS HAS BEEN DATELINE: NEW YORK -- PICTURES IN SOUND OF PEOPLE, PLACES AND EVENTS HERE IN AMERICA'S METROPOLIS, BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE VOICE OF AMERICA EACH WEEK AT THIS TIME. JOIN US AGAIN NEXT-----FOR ANOTHER DATELINE: NEW YORK.

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WJL/RCS